

SENIORS CARD AND SMARTRIDER CARD

Statement by Minister for Seniors

MR R.C. KUCERA (Yokine - Minister for Seniors) [2.12 pm]: A new and improved Seniors Card will be introduced in Western Australia at the end of this year. Members will be aware that as part of improvements to our public transport system, Transperth will introduce a new ticketing system called “SmartRider” on its buses, trains and ferries. Customers can purchase prepaid travel and use the card for automatic fare payment and entry to the transport system. As part of this initiative the state government is combining the Seniors Card benefits and the SmartRider transport concessions into one single card, with the Seniors Card on the front and the SmartRider card printed on the back. In October this year all current holders of a Seniors Card will automatically receive the new combined card and will no longer need to carry their purple seniors transport tickets and their Seniors Card to access the free public transport on Sundays, public holidays and during the annual Seniors Week. This new Seniors Card will continue to provide access to all other existing state government concessions and commercial business discounts. The new SmartRider system uses a microchip to store information on concession entitlements and the amount of money cardholders have stored on their card to pay their fares. The Office for Seniors Interests and Volunteering is providing Transperth with the names, dates of birth and addresses of seniors, under strict conditions of privacy, to automatically register their concession travel entitlements. Seniors will not be required to put a cash credit on their card to use it for their free travel entitlements. However, as with ordinary SmartRider users, they will need to put a credit on their card for travel they would otherwise have to pay for. Should a senior choose for his or her details not to be shared with Transperth, he or she will not receive the new combined card. During Seniors Week this year and until the electronic system is introduced, their existing cards will continue to allow them all their travel entitlements. However, when the new electronic systems commence next year, without the SmartRider chip the new ticketing system will not be able to process seniors’ free travel entitlements. However, they will still be able to use their existing Seniors Card to buy concession cash fares. The SmartRider system will provide a number of benefits including enhanced security, shorter boarding times, automatic calculation of the lowest fare possible for any journey and removal of the need for people to carry money with them on public transport. The new Seniors Card is expected to have a minimum life of at least five years. Although faulty cards will be replaced free, a \$5 fee will apply to misplaced or damaged cards.

The Office of Seniors Interests has written to Seniors Card holders well ahead of time to iron out queries, objections and concerns about the new system, particularly if they should choose not to take advantage of the new card’s benefits. If cardholders do nothing, they will automatically receive the new card in October free of charge with all the added and combined rewards.

The Gallop government values our senior citizens, and should any member receive an inquiry from a constituent about the new Seniors Card over coming months, helpful staff and volunteers at the Office of Seniors Interests can be contacted on 9328 9155 for metro callers, or a free call on 1800 671 233 for country callers.